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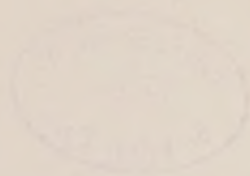


PACIFIC SCHOOL OF RELIGION

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PACIFIC SCHOOL OF MISCELLANEOUS  
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C O N T E N T S

FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

The Hellenistic Element in the Religion of Paul  
Pythagoras Caravellas

A Comparison of the Teachings of Jesus and of  
Modern Sociology on War  
Franklin Gladstone Forrester

The Church and Sex Education  
Shirlie Swallow Forrester

The Formation of Habits of the Pre-School  
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THE HELLENISTIC ELEMENT  
IN THE RELIGION OF SAINT PAUL

By

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Thesis

Submitted in the Department of  
New Testament Literature and  
Interpretation in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
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1927





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## PREFACE



THE HELLENISTIC ELEMENT  
IN THE RELIGION OF SAINT PAUL

Preface

The religion of Paul is a composite. Several factors have gone into its making in the course of a lifetime spent in fruitful service and zealous propagation of the religion of Jesus. Deeply saturated with the learning of hebrew legalism and charged with the fervent ardour of the Jewish faith, from his earlier youth, Paul had spent years of faithful and laborious study in Tarsus. In such a cosmopolitan center of learning, it is not impossible that he imbibed the abstruse teachings of the schoolman of his day as well as witnessed for himself the deeper religious significance of the various sects and movements in the Graeco-Roman world. As a Pharisee, perhaps, he looked at them through the jaundiced vision born of superior pride.

But when the center shifted after that fateful trip to Damascus which caused a cataclysmic readjustment of his religious beliefs, and clarified for him the greatness of his future mission in the cause of the growing religion of Jesus, once again he comes in touch with the religious forces among the peoples to whom he feels constrained to carry the Gospel of Christ.

Of the fact that he came in close contact with the Hellenistic religious sects and movements of his day there can be no doubt. But the question arises, whether Paul





in his zeal for making a success of his gigantic task as a Christian missionary was not influenced in turn by them. Was he only trying to influence them and open the eyes of their votaries to the way, the truth, and the life that he found for himself in Jesus Christ? Or was he consciously or unconsciously himself taking in many features of cardinal importance and building them up into the making of the New Faith that he was formulating?

It cannot be gainsaid that early Christianity, especially in the days of Paul, was very greatly influenced by contemporary life, religious, social, political, and cultural. It cannot be gainsaid also that it was very largely in the days of this great apostle that the fluid beliefs, customs, form of worship and creed of the new-found faith were being crystallized into more or less set form. At such a critical juncture in the history of any movement, the influence of extraneous forces counts for much. And considering the fact that in the Hellenistic Age, Graeco-Roman culture was flourishing, and exercising a potent influence in the shaping of men's lives and conduct in the civilized world of the day, we can legitimately pause to appraise the strength of such an influence in the making of Early Christianity as expressed in the Religion of Paul, the most outstanding figure in the Christian landscape of the Hellenistic Age.





Any such study cannot be impious, especially when undertaken with the best motives and with no preconceived notions or needless bias. The writer is a priest in the Greek Orthodox Church. An undertaking such as this would have spelled heresy. But the broadening outlook of the two years that he has spent in the Pacific School of Religion has made them the most valuable years of fruitful study, and, without in the least undermining his profound faith in the essentials of Christianity and the teachings of the Church, has opened his eyes to the marvelous way in which the Church and its teachings have developed "in the fulness of the time." Therefore, in submitting this Thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master's degree in the School, he avails himself of this privilege of thanking the faculty, and Dr. McCown in particular, for the deep debt of obligation they, as representing the intrinsic worth of the school, have laid him under.



## Chapter I

### THE STATE RELIGIONS

#### References:

- Angus, S., Environment of Early Christianity  
Hatch, W.H.P., Pauline Idea of Faith  
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Morgan, W., Religion and Theology of Paul





## Chapter I

### THE STATE RELIGIONS

Modern research in the field of New Testament literature has proven beyond all doubt that "Hellenistic religion and religious philosophy were vital factors in the formation"(1) of Pauline theology. A flood of light has been thrown on much that was formerly obscure. A new epoch has been created in the study of the Apostle, with the inevitable result that the older expositions have, to a considerable extent, become antiquated.

It is germane to our purpose to trace in brief outline the long and complicated history of religion in the Hellenistic Age, especially with reference to Greece and Italy. In the gradual evolution of religious thought and outlook in Greece several epochs stand out in prominence, each possessing intrinsic characteristics so as to be clearly distinguished as landmarks in the whole process. Despite this undeniable fact of the variety of which it is capable, stretching from the Aegean Age down to the end of paganism, there is a remarkable underlying principle of continuity. History amply testifies that more than anywhere else in the development of civilization in Greece, poetry and philosophy modified religious beliefs and rites.

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(1) Morgan, W., The Religion and Theology of Paul, p.IX



Likewise, Roman religion in the later years of the Republic and under the Empire is the outcome of a long progressive development in the course of which innumerable Gods and Goddesses both from the Etruscan and the Greek world received more and more prominence.

From early times we notice the practical universality of belief in the existence and power of the Gods. And with it was handed down from generation to generation an elaborate worship, consisting for the most part of sacrifices, religious processions, festivals, and sacred games. A regular priesthood, sometimes hereditary in certain families were also maintained. Traditional rites became established in various towns and cities of both Greece and Italy, largely supported and munificently patronized by the State. Everywhere religion was indeed an affair of the State. More than in Greece, among the Romans the religion of State was irrevocably intertwined with public life. To participate in public worship was really to perform one's civic duty just as much as one's religious obligations; and to neglect the established religion was tantamount not only to treason and disloyalty to the state, but also impiety to the Gods.

Now these civic and state religions were not mystical. They did not advocate or practice any sacramental rites whereby the votary might become regenerate or attain the intimacy of communion with deity. Nor were they concerned with the life to come. They primarily aimed rather at





obtaining the gifts of the Gods in order that life in this world might be full of happiness and prosperity. It is also very doubtful if these established religions inculcated any standards of righteous conduct or moral behavior. The Gods, to be sure, in spite of some features of the traditional mythology, were regarded as the defenders of the moral order. But purity and justice were not required of those who took part in their worship. What counted as of supreme importance was that the ritual should be duly performed by the citizens of the City or State.

Another remarkable feature equally noteworthy is that in the State worships faith as a principle of religion was quite unknown. If a man joined in the rites, it was simply because he was born or lived in a particular city. As a matter of fact, he acted not as an individual but as a member of a social or political group. Therefore, no personal conviction or trust in the Gods determined his participation in the civic religious rite. Thus, Xenophon says that Socrates trusted in Gods, (1) though his purpose is not so much to give a trait of his master's character as to show the falsity of the common belief that he was an atheist. For if he trusted in Gods, it was manifestly absurd to suppose that he did not believe in the

(1) Cf. Mem. i, 1, 5, πιστεύειν δὲ Θεοῖς, πῶς οὐκ εἶναι Θεοὺς ἐνόμιζεν; The phrase νομίζειν Θεοὺς means simply to believe in Gods or to acknowledge

their existence. (Cf., e.g., Plato, Apol. 18 c)



existence of such beings. So, too, personal piety is clearly indicated in an injunction found in the *Epinomis*, a dialogue wrongly ascribed to Plato: "Pray to the Gods with trust." (1) Again, even the statement of the orator Aeschines that he had come into the court-room with trust in the gods, the laws of the State, and the jury, reflects a certain amount of pious feeling; but it is obviously not an expression of any very profound religious sentiment (2) However firmly a man might believe in the existence of the Gods, and however much he might trust in them, such belief or trust was not felt to be a requisite for participation in the rites of the established religions, which were public worship rather than expressions of personal piety.

A noticeable change becomes apparent in this religious evolution with the beginning of the Christian era. Men endowed with any sense of intelligence and religious fervour found themselves incapable of belief in the traditional divinities. Thus came about the movement of Augustus to resuscitate the old Roman religion. In this he was prompted more by self-interest and patriotism than by personal piety or zeal for reform.

The imperial cult was Rome's endeavour to supply to her empire a universal religion as political as was her

(1) Cf. *Epin.* 980 c. πιστεύσας τοῖς θεοῖς εὐχου

Cf. Stallbaum *ad. loc.*

(2) Cf. *Contra Ctes.* I, ἐγὼ δὲ πεπιστευκῶς ἦκω  
πρῶτον μὲν τοῖς θεοῖς, ἔπειτα τοῖς νόμοις  
καὶ ὑμῖν.





own religion. It was intended as a bond of union and a sign of the greatness and ubiquity of Rome. It strengthened Roman authority and helped to unify the world. The living emperor was a visible God dispensing justice. (1)

But any such attempt initiated by the State was doomed to prove futile. The naive beliefs of bygone days could not possess the same appeal to the religious demands of the cultured classes. Such people could see in the State religion only a mass of infantile and inane superstitions. But they put up with its claims, even went to the length of defending it at times, because it was the religio civilis. To them the Stoic doctrine of an all-pervasive deity and the mystery cults with their sacraments and elaborate rituals brought more lasting and tangible satisfaction.

Philosophy thus tended to destroy belief in the Gods. The Philosophic criticism of the existing religion was partly theoretical and partly ethical. The theoretical criticism rose especially through the search for a unifying principle operative in the universe. If the manifold phenomena of the universe were all reduced to a single cause, the Gods might indeed be still thought of as existing, but their importance was gone. There was thus a tendency either toward monotheism or else towards some sort of materialistic monism.

Furthermore, since religion was connected closely with the state, the destruction of the States resulted

(1) Angus, Environment of Early Christianity, p. 88



in important changes in religion. Natural and racial barriers to a considerable extent were broken down. The common language was the , which became the vehicle of a world civilization. But, with this cosmopolitanism there went naturally a new individualism, which particularly exercised a powerful influence upon religious thought. Thus--the religio civilis gave place to a religio licita. (1)

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(1) Cf. Machen, The Origin of Paul's Religion .

Ch. VI, "The Religion of the Hellenistic Age."





## Chapter II

### THE MYSTERIES

#### References:

Angus, S., Mystery Religions and Christianity

Cumont, F., Les religions orientales dans le  
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## Chapter II

### THE MYSTERIES

Side by side with the city and State religions there existed, as already noted, a totally different type of religion. These were the Mystery Religions. They differed in many respects from the established worships. Primarily, the mysteries were of a personal and voluntary character, each individual attaching himself to the cult of his choice on account of certain advantages which he hoped to gain from it. The controlling factor in the case of the Religio Civilis was birth or residence in a certain locality, but in the mysteries on the other hand, the controlling motive was desperate need and personal conviction. While the former purposed to obtain the favour of the Gods here and now, the latter laid stress above everything else on the life to come. Again, while the former overlooked the need for morals, the latter did not consider them unimportant. Initiation was looked upon as a process of purification, and although the ritual aspect of it often bulked large in the popular imagination, in some of these religions, personal purity of life and social uprightness of conduct were requisites. It could not be believed by intelligent persons, however much stress might be laid upon the necessity of being initiated, that future happiness, the life to come, could be wholly independent of moral rectitude in the present life.





Percy Gardner (The Religious Experience of St. Paul, 1911, p.87) says: "We have no reason to think that those who claimed salvation through Isis or Mithras were much better than their neighbors. They felt secure of the help of their patron-deity in the affairs of life and in the future world, but they did not therefore live at a higher level." Nevertheless, it is impossible to doubt that they exercised a good influence over many of their votaries.

C. H. Moore (Harvard Theological Review, VIII, pp. 180 ff.) says: "Thus we find that there were many elements in these Eastern Religions which in the last three centuries of Paganism at least made for righteousness. ....That the Oriental religions actually contributed to the higher moral and spiritual life of the Roman Empire during the second, third, and fourth centuries is beyond question.....To fail to recognize the real moral value of Oriental Paganism is to fail to understand the first centuries of our era, and so to remain blind to the true nature of the world in which Christianity established its superior worth."

The mysteries were of diverse origin and diverse character. But one feature was common to all of them. That was the sacred Mystery itself, in which the ritual of the cult culminated, and in which the worshiper was brought into a mystical relation with the God or Goddess of the worship. Hence it was of a truly sacramental nature. Only the initiates were allowed to be present,



and great care was taken to prevent outsiders from learning anything about the ceremony or its significance.

The Mystery Cults enjoyed great popularity throughout the length and breadth of the Roman Empire, and some of them continued to attract worshipers, even after Christianity had triumphed over paganism. They had multitudes of adherents both in the cities and in the country districts, as the literary and epigraphic sources that have come down to us testify. Soldiers and merchants, government officials and slaves were all votaries of these mystery deities; and wherever they went, a shrine was almost sure to be set up and a center of influence established.

The nature of the appeal which the mystery religions made is not difficult to understand. Their rites were mysterious and impressive; they were well organized; their sacraments met a popular demand; and they promised those who were initiated into them a blissful life after death.

But far more important for an understanding of Cult religion than these public rites are the rites to which none were admitted save those who had passed through a severe probation and taken an oath of secrecy. This secret worship was known by the name of the mysteries, and those who took part in it were called mystae (*μύσται*).

Every cult had its mysteries; we read of the mysteries of Orpheus, Cybele, Isis, Mithras, and many more. In them the popular rites and beliefs were refined and elaborated;





and they may be taken as representing the faith of the more earnest and enlightened followers of the Oriental Gods.

To Apuleius we are indebted for a graphic description of the chief mystery rite, that of initiation as it was practiced in the Mysteries of the Egyptian Goddess Isis. The description belongs to the middle of the second century A.D. But the ceremonies of which it tells are of course much older. The candidate Lucius is represented as earnestly and often beseeching the high priest that his desire for initiation be fulfilled. But the high priest restrains his impatience and requires him to wait submissively for the sign of the Goddess's will. To approach her unbidden might entail the penalty of death. "For the portals of the nether world," he admonishes him, "and the guardianship of salvation are in the hands of the Goddess, and the initiation itself is solemnized as the Symbol of a voluntary death and a salvation given in answer to prayer. For the goddess is wont to choose such as, having fulfilled a course of life, stand at the threshold of the departing light, to whom nevertheless the great mysteries of religion can be entrusted. And after they have been by her providence in a sense born again, she places them again in the course of a new life in salvation." Not till after repeated instructions and a prolonged discipline of prayer and fasting is Lucius' desire gratified. Covered with a coarse linen cloth, he is taken by the hand and led into the most holy place. What happens there? Lucius, who is





made to tell the story, draws a veil over the scene. It is not permissible to disclose the secrets. But he consents to give a certain symbolical description of his experiences. "I penetrated," he says, "the boundaries of death. I trod the threshold of Proserpine and after being borne through all the elements I returned to earth; at midnight I beheld the sun radiating white light; I came into the presence of the Gods below and the Gods above, and did them reverence close at hand."

After this initiation, Lucius is arrayed in the robe of Olympus; a flaming torch is put in his hand and a crown of spotless palm on his head. In the guise "Set up like the image of God," he is exhibited to the people and receives from them religious homage.(1)

Not less than the Cults the religious philosophy of the age bears witness to this idea of a regenerative change. Philo's prophetic intelligence through which alone a man is capable of knowing God and exercising worship is the product of a spiritual and mysterious birth. In the Hermetic writings the need for regeneration (*παλιγγενεσία*) is strongly emphasized. A passage quoted by Dr. Kennedy tells how Tat became the subject of such a transformation. Set free from the twelve evil propensities, and endowed with the ten divine powers, he can say of himself, "My spirit is illumined.....To thee, O God, Author of my new

(1) Apuleius, Metamorphoses or Golden Ass, XI, 24



creation, I, Tat, offer spiritual sacrifices."(1)

Regeneration as conceived in Hellenistic religion went far beyond anything that can be described in terms of psychology. The moral element, at least in the case of the Cults, when contemplated at all, was in the background. The vital thing was that a man became a partaker of the divine nature. Lucius, as we have seen, in the completion of his initiation, was greeted as a God. In the Compagno tablet the neophyte receives the assurance, "Happy and blessed one, thou shall be God instead of mortal."(2)

Usually he assumed a God's name. The Attis mystic became himself an Attis. "Metnought in a dream that I had become Attis, and that the festival of the so-called Hilaria was fulfilled to me by the great Mother, which manifested the salvation from Hades which had become ours." (3)

Frequently the process is described as one of deification (Θεωθῆναι, ἀποθεωθῆναι . . . One may doubt, however, if much more was meant than that transformation from mortal to immortal substance which Athanasius had in view in his formula, "God became man that man might become God."

From the subject of regeneration we turn to that of mystical union. The two are closely connected, for in general the second is regarded as the condition and cause of the first.

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(1) Poimandres, XIV (XIII) text in Reitzenstein, R. pp.339-48

(2) Harrison, J., Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion, 3rd edition, Cambridge, 1922, p.586 ff.

(3) Hepding H., Attis, p. 197





We have seen that in the public festivals of the Cult Gods the worshippers accompanied the drama with frenzied demonstrations of sympathy. What was the idea behind the orgiastic outburst? Undoubtedly it was that of union with the divinity. Always the primitive interpretation of ecstasy was this, that a god had entered into the man, that the man was God-possessed, <sup>ἑ</sup>ἑ θεός. Thus united with the God, the worshipper would regard himself as sharing, like the neophyte in the initiation rite, the God's experiences of death and resurrection.

"As truly as Osiris lives, "So runs an Egyptian text, "he also shall live; as truly as Osiris is not dead shall he not die; as truly as Osiris is not destroyed, shall he not be destroyed." The purpose of the sacred drama alike in the public rites and in the Mysteries was to excite the ecstasy in which the Mystic Communion was consummated.

In this interpretation of ecstasy as the sign of divine possession we have the primitive root of all mystical conceptions, of the relation of the human soul to God. But already in Hellenistic religion the primitive notion of the mystical union is subjected to important modifications. We can trace three lines of development.

In the first place we find a strain of thought in which the divine indwelling appears not as the mere experience of a rapturous moment, but as an abiding condition. The second line of mystical development shows a more radical breach with the past. In this case the



notion of ecstasy is retained, but it is interpreted from the standpoint of a metaphysical opposition between the body, the soul, the material and the spiritual. Leaving the material world far beneath him, the ecstatic wings his way into the intelligible world, the region of immortal light, where the soul comes face to face with the divine. This mode of ecstasy conceived as a supersensible and super-rational apprehension of the divine has as its correlate a transcendent conception of God. God is no longer thought of in a personal way, but as the Being that lies beyond all rational determinations.

In the third line along which the mystical idea developed the conception of divine possession was rationalized, being interpreted in terms of the Stoic Philosophy. When Seneca declares "God is nigh thee, God is with thee, God is within thee...A holy spirit dwells within us to mark our evil and good,"(1) what he means is that our rational universe is a spark or manifestation of the universal reason that penetrates and orders the universe.

Hellenistic religion stands out as the classical example of syncretism. It was a product of an interchange of ideas and sentiments between the East and the West continued through many centuries. What the East contributed was a highly characteristic type of religion, a type very different from that native to Greece and Rome.

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(1) Seneca, Epistolae Morales, 41. 2



Unlike the faith of these lands, mystery religion, completely detached from the State and its interests, made its appeal to men not as citizens, but as individuals conscious of a personal need and desirous of personal salvation. And further, its preoccupation was not with the present life, but with a life beyond the grave. The great boon it offered was a blessed immortality. With respect to the present life and the existing world its view was deeply pessimistic. As material, the existing world is evil; the soul is shut up in the body as in a prison house, its connection with the material being the source of all its miseries. What redemption meant was deliverance from that bondage; and it was effected through a mysterious new birth in which the soul became itself a god. In its piety oriental religion was ascetic, enthusiastic, and mystical. It taught contempt for the things of the body, and found in ecstatic union with the divinity the crowning religious experience.





## Chapter III

### TYPICAL MYSTERY RELIGIONS

#### References:

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## Chapter III

## TYPICAL MYSTERY RELIGIONS

The Greeks understood by *μυστήριον* a secret worship--the idea of secret lying at the root of the word--to which certain privileged people, *οἱ μνηθέντες*, were admitted, a ritual of purification or other preliminary probation being required before *μύησις* and the mystic ceremony itself being so important and perilous that the hierophant was needed to guide the Catechumen aright. The usual mystery in Greece was in some sense a religious drama, and this opinion is confirmed by Lucian's positive statement that no mystery was ever celebrated without dancing. We may also regard it as probable that some kind of *ἱερὸς λόγος*, some secret communication, was made to the mystae; this *λόγος* was generally of the nature of an explanation of a divine name, or a peculiar story, divergent from the current mythology, explaining the sacred things that might be shown to the eyes of the privileged.

The first of these religions to be introduced into Rome was the religion of the Phrygian Cybele, the Magna Mater.(1) The Myth of Cybele is narrated in various forms. According to the most characteristic form, the youthful Attis, beloved by Cybele, is struck with madness by the jealous goddess, deprives himself of his virility, dies through his own mad act and is mourned by the goddess.

(1) The following sketch is reproduced in brief from Cumont's Les Religions Orientales dans le Paganisme Romain, Dezieme edition, 1909.





The myth contains no account of a resurrection; all that Cybele is able to obtain is that the body of Attis should be preserved, that his hair should continue to grow, and that his little finger should move.

No less important than the religion of Cybele and Attis was the Graeco-Egyptian religion of Isis and Osiris. Isis and Osiris are both ancient Egyptian deities whose worship, in modified form, was carried over first into the Greek Kingdom of the Ptolemies, and thence to the remotest bounds of the Roman Empire. The myth which concerns these gods is reported at length in Plutarch's treatise, "Concerning Isis and Osiris." Briefly it is as follows: Osiris, the brother and husband of Isis, after ruling in a beneficent manner over the Egyptians, is plotted against by his brother Typhon. Finally Typhon makes a chest and promises to give it to anyone who exactly fits it. Osiris enters the chest, which is then closed by Typhon and thrown into the Nile. After a search, Isis finds the chest at Byblos on the coast of Phoenicia, and brings it back to Egypt. But Typhon succeeds in getting possession of the body of Osiris and cuts it up into fourteen parts, which are scattered through Egypt. Isis goes about collecting the parts. Osiris becomes King of the nether world, and helps his son Horus to gain a victory over Typhon.(1)

By far the best known, and the most characteristic, of the really Greek mysteries were the rites celebrated

(1) Machen, Religion of the Hellenistic Age, p. 231



in honour of Demeter and her daughter Persephone in Eleusis. Archeology and the study of vases have yielded abundant material for a fruitful study of these mysteries. There are also several inscriptions. But although they illuminate and determine many points of considerable interest, they mainly touch on the external organization and do not touch on the passion that was shown only to the mystae in the inner hall. Ancient literary records are of no less importance in this connection, and these comprise the writings of both pagans and the Christian Fathers like Clement and Amobius, who were undoubtedly initiated into the esoteric knowledge of the mysteries in their pagan youth.

In the Homeric hymn to Demeter poetry takes over the main events of the mythology of Eleusis and works them into a pleasing and artistic form. This poetic work probably dating from the seventh century B.C. narrates the story of carrying away of Persephone, while she gathered flowers in a meadow, by Hades, ruler of the world below. And it is told how Demeter refused her aid in the production of corn from the soil. Earth became unfruitful and the human race would have perished but for Zeus who arranged that Persephone should pass every eight of the twelve months of the year on the green earth. In this hymn we see a purely agricultural festival shot through with poetry and human interest by the literary Greeks. It was probably in the sixth century B.C. that this agricultural rite





ceased to be practiced and became more closely concerned with the life beyond the grave, in which the initiated had great advantages over those who fail to partake of the rite. The poet Sophocles and the painter Polygnotus confine happiness in the next world to those who have been initiated in the mysteries of Eleusis. The Christian Fathers evidently look on the mysteries as in a measure rivals of the Christian hope. And that there was an ethical element in them we may judge from the speech of Androcles to his judges. "You are initiated, that you may punish impiety, and save those who defend themselves from injustice." Cicero in his "De Legibus" expresses the views that Athens had produced nothing better than the mysteries of Eleusis not only in regard to the ordering and civilizing of life, but in regard to the furnishing a good hope in death.

From the testimony of the Homeric hymn to Demeter we infer that Demeter and Kore, or Persephone, the two goddesses, are the chief personages of the mystery with the God of the underworld as an accessory. We can clearly determine the chief figures of the mystery in the early period at which the record begins. The secondary and the accessory figures were Eubouleus, Triptolemos, Iacchos, and Dionysos. Eubouleus, the Eleusinian shepherd of good counsel, had both a Chthonic and a vegetative character. He was remembered in the preliminary sacrifices, but does not seem to have belonged to the inner circle of the mystic cult. The





personality of Triptolemos is brighter and more human. He is mentioned in the Homeric hymn as one of those to whom the mysteries were revealed by Demeter. But whether he played any part in the Eleusinian mystery or mystic drama is a doubtful question. As regards the actual ceremony we are able to ascertain a fairly connected account of the ritual up to the point where the Mystae entered the hall at Eleusis. The whole celebration lasted several days. It took place every year, but seems to have been conducted with extra splendour every four years. On the thirteenth of Boedromion, the Epheboi marched out to Eleusis, and on the fourteenth escorted back the "sacra" from Eleusis to the Eleusinion in the city after a short pause by the "holy fig tree" in the suburb. These sacra probably included the Statues of the Goddess, for we hear that the *φαιδωννής τοῖς θεοῖν* was in some way responsible for them, and his name alludes to the process of washing and cleaning the idols.

The first day was the "day of gathering" when the applicants for initiation met and heard the address which was delivered by hierophants, assisted by the daduchos. This was a formal proclamation bidding those who were disqualified and for some reason unworthy of initiation to depart. From the earliest period a man was barred from communion if he was at that time polluted by bloodshed or another notorious miasma. But the conception of sin



tended to be ritualistic rather than ethical. Libanius states that the leaders of the mystae proclaimed to the assembly that they must be "pure in hand and soul and of Hellenic speech" and that they cross-examined each individual as to the particular food he had tasted or abstained from recently, informing that he was impure if he had eaten such and such things. We have no reason to surmise that the moral scrutiny that was exercised could have been severe in view of the large number of applicants and the lack of time and machinery. After the assembly, perhaps on the next day, the proclamation sent them to the seashore to purify themselves in the salt waters, and it seems that sprinkling of pigs' blood was also part of the Cathartic ritual. among the ceremonies in Athens before the procession started for Eleusis with Iacchos on the nineteenth of Boedromion, the most important was some kind of sacrifice. Then the procession bearing the god Iacchos started for Eleusis. The twentieth is generally spoken of as the day of the exodus of Iacchos and the latter part of the ceremony was sometimes called "The Eikades." The one feature of some anthropological interest in the account of the journey along the sacred way was the cursing and badinage at the bridge. Thus safeguarded against the evil influences, purified, fasting and inspired with the religious exaltation that fasting assists, the sacred band reached Eleusis too fatigued for the intoxicating midnight revel. We





cannot say with certainty what were the ceremonies in the mystery-hall. Perhaps something was acted there in the nature of a religious drama or a passionplay. We may imagine that the mystic play was one which would best move pity and love, the sense of pathos and consolation in the spectator, such a theme as the loss of the daughter, the sorrow of the mother, the return of the loved one and the ultimate reconciliation.

At any rate we have no right <sup>to think</sup> that any part of the solemn ceremony was coarse and obscene. Even Clemens who brings such a charge against all mysteries in general does not try to substantiate it in regard to the Eleusis, and the utterance of later Christian writers who accuse the indecencies of Paganism have no critical value for the study of the mysteries of Eleusis.

Among other religious acts in the service of the mystery there was at least one of equal importance with that which has been called the "passion play", and this was the act of the hierophant when he displayed the secret things. Probably these included statues of the deities. These images were perhaps of great antiquity or at least of preternatural sanctity, so that the view of them was both a danger and a privilege; and the men who saw them, revealed perhaps in some mystic light, would feel that they stood nearer to the divinity henceforth.

Some kind of a sacrament was a preliminary condition to the mystery or was itself part of the



From Clemens Alexandrinus we learn that the password of the Eleusinian Mysteries is as follows:

"I have fasted, I have drunk the barley-drink, I have taken from the sacred chest, having tasted thereof I placed them in the Kalathos, and again from the Kalathos into the chest." This then is a kind of communion service. In drinking the *κυνεὺν* the mystae drank of the same cup as the Goddess drank of, when at last she broke her nine days fast in the midst of her sorrow, and the antiquity of the ritual is attested by the Homeric hymn. Part of the same celebration was the eating by the communicant of some sacred food which was preserved in the mystic cista, pain benit with other cereals and fruits.

We know nothing positively of any higher moral teaching in these mysteries. We have no record and no claim put forth. It is clear that the immediate aim was not an ethical one, though it is quite reasonable to believe that in certain cases they would exercise a beneficial influence upon conduct.

The Amphictyonic decree of the second century B.C. speaks of the mysteries as enforcing the lesson that "the greatest of human blessings is fellowship and mutual trust." But these words cannot be taken as proving any actual doctrine that was explicitly preached, but as alluding to the natural influence which all participation in mystic rites produces on the mind, the quickened sense of comradeship between the members.





As regards the moral question then we may conclude that though in the Homeric poem there is no morality, but happiness after death depends on the performance of ceremonies and punishment follows the neglect of them, by the time of Aristophanes the mysteries had come to make for righteousness in some degree; probably not so much through direct precepts or exhortation, but rather through their psychological results, through the abiding influences that may be produced on the will and feeling by solemn, majestic, and long-sustained ceremony, accompanied by acts of purification and self-denial and leading up to a profound sense of self-deliverance. It has been doubted whether the Eleusinian faith had really a strong and vital hold on the religious imagination of the people.

Doubtless there was neither uniformity nor dogmatism in this as in any other domain of Greek religious speculation and the paradise of the mystae was not always clearly defined.

Nevertheless the Eleusinian faith is not silent on the stones; it speaks in the epitaph of the hierophant of Eleusis who had found that death was not an evil but

a blessing, "Ὅς τελετὰς ἀνέφαινε καὶ ὄργια  
πάννυχα, μύσταις Εὐμόλπου, προχέων  
ἡμερόεσσαν ὅπα."

(1)

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(1) Farnell, Vol III, p. 350





## Chapter IV

### HELLENISTIC PHILOSOPHY

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## Chapter IV

## HELLENISTIC PHILOSOPHY

About the beginning of the Christian era most intelligent Greeks and Romans no longer believed in the established religions, which they regarded only as traditional State functions. Some persons of this sort found what they wanted in the Mystery Cults; but others, and especially those whose minds and consciences had been educated by writings or lectures on religious and ethical subjects, sought satisfaction in the teachings of the philosophers. Stoicism was particularly well adapted to meet their needs, and for many it took the place of a religion.

The most eminent stoics of the first and early second centuries after Christ were Seneca and Epictetus. The former was a distinguished statesman and man of letters in the reign of Nero, whereas the latter was born a slave, and became a popular teacher of morals. These two figures illustrate in a striking way the wide range of appeal which stoic teachings had under the Empire. Many cultivated men and women found in the ethics of Stoicism an ideal of life that was both attractive and satisfying; and the Stoic preachers, who harangued the multitudes on the streets and the market places impressed upon the minds of the humbler classes the advantages of honesty and uprightness of life.

In its ethical teaching Stoicism emphasized the individual's will and conscience, while as a religion it





fostered a sense of fellowship with the soul of the universe. It taught belief in one supreme deity and at the same time allowed men to worship the various divinities of the traditional religions; but of faith as a principle of religion it made nothing. Seneca uses fides in the sense of credence given to a person, a promise, and faithfulness. The last is extolled as a virtue of very great worth; but it is the faithfulness of one man to another, not fidelity to God. The word never means faith or trust in the Supreme Being. Thus fides in Seneca belongs to the sphere of ethics rather than to that of religion. In Epictetus **πίστις** has the meaning of assurance, proof and fidelity; but it is nowhere used in connection with religion. The verb **πιστεύειν**, which occurs a number of times without any religious connotation, is found once. The fact is that faith was not an important factor in the religious life of the Stoics, and hence it played no conspicuous part in their religious teaching.

Eclecticism in philosophy and religion appealed to many cultivated and thoughtful persons in the Graeco-Roman world. Its leading representatives were two men of great influence and distinction--Cicero and Plutarch. The former of these had no profound personal experience of religion; but he was a serious observer and thinker as well as a statesman, and he held a religious view of the world. Plutarch was also a man of wide culture and varied learning; but he was unlike Cicero in that, being a priest of Pythian



Appolo and an initiate in the Eleusinian mysteries, he had had more varied religious experience. Religion and moral questions were his chief interests.

But Cicero and Plutarch had a large acquaintance with the religious and philosophical thought of their own and earlier times, and they gathered freely whatever pleased them from any and every quarter; and yet faith or trust in God was not a principle of religion for either of them.

Among the most characteristic conceptions of Hellenistic religion is that of Gnosis. Every Mystery Cult had its secret knowledge which it imparted to its initiates. Such knowledge consisted in part at least in an interpretation of the inner meaning of its ritual, the inter-relation amounting probably to a more or less developed theory of the universe and man's place in it. Hippolytus, one of the Church fathers, tells us that the Gnostic sect of the Naasenes "frequent the so-called Mysteries of the Great Mother, thinking that through what is performed there they see clearly the whole mystery." The Mystery Gnosis was not, however, all of this character. Much of it consisted in mere magical formulae and passwords, designed to secure a safe passage for the soul after death in its ascent through the planetary spheres to the realm of light. The papyri and especially the Mithras Liturgy supply us with copious examples of these dubious instruments of salvation.





To the human understanding, God is inaccessible, an unknown God; but He desires to be known, and reveals himself through inner revelation. In the Hellenistic age philosophy had fallen into discredit; the conflict of opinions had undermined faith in the ability of human reason to reach truth, and men sought for a surer word. This craving Hellenistic religion, in its fashion, met.

For the reception of the saving knowledge the typical condition is ecstasy; illumination comes as an ecstatic vision. "The knowledge and vision of God," says a passage in the Hermetic writings, "involves the silence and the abeyance of all the senses. For he who perceives this can perceive nothing else.....Forgetting all bodily perceptions and movements he keeps still." We also read of the gift of gnosis as following a baptism in the or spirit. If ecstasy in the strict sense is not always presupposed, there is always the idea of a detachment of the mind from the visible and temporal and an ascent to the world of pure intelligence. We can thus understand why ascetic discipline should usually appear as an indispensable preparation for the Mystic vision: the soul must cut itself loose from its entanglement in the things of sense.

The supreme importance thus attached to Gnosis is one of the most outstanding features of Hellenistic religion. A passage in the Hermetic writings defines piety as "the knowledge of God," and another passage declares that in this alone is salvation for men.





If we ask how precisely gnosis is effective for salvation it would no doubt be a partial answer to say that is "a way of life."

If the essential contribution of the East to the religious world of Paul's day was, therefore, necessarily a type of individualistic, other-worldly, orgiastic, dualistic, ascetic, redemptive, mystical religion, that of the West can be summed up in the word Greek philosophy, that took the initiative and that played the leading part. Already in Plato we see the process begun. His conception of the soul as a stranger from a higher realm immured in the body, his teaching with respect to immortality, his doctrine of an inspired madness that releases from the tyranny of Custom and fills the soul with love and yearning for divine beauty, must be traced back to the Oriental sources.

The late Stoicism shows further progress in the same direction. Allying itself with popular religion and popular superstition, philosophy assumed a preponderatingly religious character. Belief in the Gods was harmonized with a philosophical conception of the universe, the Gods being interpreted by means of the allegorical method as aspects or manifestations of the one universal rational principle. It was thus that conceptions like the Logos ( Λόγος ) and νοῦς , identified now with Hermes or again with the Egyptian Thoth, received the half mythological character which they bear in Hellenistic thought. Of the



earlier Hellenistic religious philosophy of Gnosis, the classical example is provided by the Alexandrine Jew, Philo. Much as Philo borrowed from Plato, from the Stoics and from the Old Testament, his cardinal religious ideas are at bottom Oriental. To the same stream belong the Hermetic writings, the many Gnostic sects and the Neo-Platonic philosophy.

Hellenistic gnosis represents however only one of the two lines of syncretistic development. If philosophy was permeated by Oriental religion, it is also true that the Oriental Cults were to some extent modified in their turn by contact with Greek thought. It was as partially Hellenized that they conquered the West. How far their Hellenism went beyond a mere elimination of elements offensive to Western feeling is not easy to say. Certainly their Oriental character was not materially altered. We may take it perhaps that the gnosis associated with the mysteries of the various Cults, when it was more than a knowledge of mere magic formulae and passwords, was borrowed from the religious philosophy rather than developed from within.





## Chapter V

### ST. PAUL AND THE MYSTERY RELIGIONS

#### TERMINOLOGY

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## Chapter V.

## ST. PAUL AND THE MYSTERY

## RELIGIONS TERMINOLOGY

It is clear from the foregoing discussion that the post-Christian and later mystery rituals on investigation are obviously not influenced by Christianity. But, at the same time, the remarkable similarity of these mystery rites and Christian usage cannot be explained as a mere break of historical co-incidence. Therefore, the modern critic argues, that, since the mystery rites are not dependent on Christian usage, the Christian usage in its turn must be dependent on the former.

Gresham Machen argues that in the first place it is by no means clear that pagan usage has not been influenced by Christianity. In the second place, the similarity between the Pagan and the Christian usages is often enormously exaggerated; sometimes a superficial similarity of language masks the most profound differences of underlying meaning. Therefore, the conclusion is, to say the least, precarious.(1)

The question now arises: to what extent does the use of the Mystery terminology involve the adoption of the underlying ideas? We cannot deny the fact that running through the Pauline epistles time and again there occurs a train of terms and ideas which have direct association with the mystery religions, e.g. I Cor. 2.6, etc.

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(1) Machen, J. Gresham, p. 238



A discussion then of this mystery terminology so frequently employed by Paul ought to throw a flood of light as to the fact or otherwise of the influence thereof on the religion of Paul. The following discussion is based largely on Kennedy's presentation of Saint Paul's relation to the mystery terminology, which constitutes the fourth chapter of his book, St. Paul and the Mystery Religions.

First of all, we will examine the term .

It is used nineteen times in the epistles of Paul. The underlying idea which it conveys is fundamentally that of something once hidden, but now revealed. In the LXX, it invariably means the secrets or secret plans of God or men, usually the latter. It occurs once in Daniel, where it stands for the King's dream. In the gospels it occurs in Matthew 13.11, *ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν ὅτι ὑμῖν δέδοται γνῶναι τὰ μυστήρια τῆς βασιλείας τῶν οὐρανῶν*, also Mark 4.11, Luke 8.10, where it stands for the secrets of the Kingdom which are being made manifest in the work and teaching of Jesus. Some of the instances of the Pauline Epistles correspond with the usage made of the word in the LXX. An example of this is found in Romans 11.25. "For I do not wish you, brethern, to be ignorant of this *μυστήριον* ...that callousness has, in part, fallen upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles come in, and so all Israel shall be saved." Paul can only explain Israel's rejection of the Gospel on the ground that it is the secret purpose of God, whereby the





salvation of the Gentiles shall ultimately prove to be a compelling force to save Israel also.

For the New Testament, the Old Testament, and also for the Mystery Religions, the prophet is the one who can declare to his fellowmen the hidden will of God. So Paul in I. Cor. describes the transformation of believers as a **μυστήριον**, that is, a Divine secret which has been revealed to him alone. Again in I. Cor. 4.1, he speaks of himself and his fellow laborers as "ministers of Christ and stewards of the **μυστήριον** of God." This gift of revealing the secrets of God Paul regarded as even more important than that of "Speaking with tongues," though the latter was also of the Spirit. While the apostle was held a prisoner at Rome, he writes to the Ephesians, Ch. 3.1 ff.: "For this cause I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles, if as a matter of fact ye heard of the stewardship of grace of God granted to me with a view to you, how that by revelation was made known to me the **μυστήρια** .....which were not made known in other generations....that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel." A wider aspect of the same idea is brought forth in Ephesians 1. 9 ff.: "Having made known to us the **μυστήριον** of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in him for the dispensation of the fullness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ."



Without dealing with anymore of the passages in which the term *μυστήριον* is used, let us notice the implications attaching to it. In most cases it is found in connection with verbs of revelation, such as *ἀποκαλύπτειν, φανεροῦν, γνωρίζειν*. This is in full accordance with Paul's conception of himself as preacher as in I.Cor.1.23: "We proclaim Christ crucified."

Also II Cor. 5.20: "We are ambassadors, therefore, on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God." It is also used in deference to the transforming discovery which Paul has reached along the lines of his own Christian experience, that Gentile as well as Jew is open to the blessings of the Gospel. It sometimes has a distinct eschatological significance as in I Cor. 2.7: "We speak God's wisdom in a mystery....the wisdom which God fore-ordained for our glory." Also Colossians 1.26, Ephesians 1.9, II Thessalonians 2.7. We must of course make allowance for the Old Testament conceptions, but after this is done it seems evident that Paul has to some extent identified himself with the point of view of the Mystery Religions.

In I Cor. 2.6, Paul refers to *σοφία*, a higher stage of instruction which he imparts to the *τέλειοι*. Kennedy thinks it is possible that there is an allusion in both these expressions to the arrogant claims of the Apollos-party. It is known that Alexandrian Judaism





emphasized a superior knowledge (σοφία) which they believed to be bestowed by God upon elect souls. In Wisd.8.4 this personified σοφία is spoken of as μύστις . . . τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐπιστήμης . Philo, in connection with certain Old Testament passages speaks of "instructing in divine mysteries the initiates who are worthy of such sacred mysteries." The τέλειος may belong to this class of mysteries. In Plato, the phrase τὰ τέλεια καὶ ἐποπτικά (μυστήρια) is used to denote the higher initiation and describes the man who employs the memories of what his soul once saw in fellowship with God (συμπορευθεῖσα Θεῷ) as "being ever initiated into perfect mysteries," (τελέους ἀεὶ τελετάς τε- λούμενος) and alone becoming "truly perfect" (τέλειος ὄντως). Phaedrus 249 C. Reitzenstein, (Hellenic Mystery Religions, p.165) shows us that in the Hermetic literature, those receiving the Baptism of the Divine νοῦς become τέλειος .

Paul uses the term τέλειος seven times. In two of the passages where it occurs, τέλειος is contrasted with νήπιος (I Cor. 14.20, Eph. 4.13). Here the term has the meaning of full grown as contrasted with childish. It is the stage of mature knowledge as opposed to elementary knowledge. The word, πνευματικοί is used as an equivalent for τέλειος in the context of I Cor. 8.1 ff., and is also put in opposition to νήπιος .

In a general way, the term "mature" might be used to suit all the Pauline passages. Weiss, in his Commentary on I Cor. 3.3, points out that some of the Stoics and Philo



use **τέλειος** to describe the culminating period of a good life. Philo (Leg. Alleg. III, 859) puts it after the two earlier phrases of **ἀρχόμενος** and **ὁπρὸκόπων**. Epictetus, in The Encheiridion throws some light on **τέλειον** which I Cor. 13.10, Paul contrasts with **τὸ ἐκ μέρους**. He also sheds light on **οἱ τέλειοι** of Philippians 3.15. In both these passages the term seems to have an anticipatory meaning, for the Apostle has just spoken of himself as having not reached the goal. Epictetus applies the term to the man who has set out on the true path and who is still advancing. He warns against not making any progress. This seems to be strictly in accord with the Apostle's usage of the term. In view of the associations with the Mystery Religions, which the communities had, to which Paul is speaking, it is only fair to suppose that the mystery atmosphere had some influence upon him, though no definite conclusions can be reached as to how far Paul agrees with the Mystery ideas.

The term **πνεῦμα** is employed in the Epistles more than one hundred and fifty times, and in all but about thirty it refers to the direct influence of God. It is the Divine response to faith in Christ crucified, risen and alive for evermore. In Romans 8.9,10 he identifies the **πνεῦμα** with the indwelling Christ. "But ye are not in the flesh but in the spirit, if so be that the spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man has not the spirit of Christ he is none of his. And if Christ is in you,





the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness." The new life of the Christian may be regarded as **πνεῦμα** in contrast with **σὰρξ** , because the Spirit so transforms the inner life that it becomes one with the Divine life of Christ. Sometimes **πνεῦμα** seems to stand for merely the inner life of man without any special reference to Divine inspiration, so I Cor. 2.11: "What man knoweth the things of man, except the spirit of man which is in him."

Paul's use of the word **νοῦς** in this circle of ideas seems to be a little perplexing, but generally has the meaning given to it in the popular usage of the period, that is, the power of judging that which belongs to the inner life. When this judgment is true to itself, it will decide in favor of the Divine law, as in Romans 7.25: "So then, I of myself with the **νοῦς** indeed, serve the law of God, but with the **σὰρξ** the law of sin." That is, apart from Divine influence with my **νοῦς** I serve the law of God, but if the **νοῦς** is not enlivened by the Divine **πνεῦμα** it will be limited by its fleshy associations. The **νοῦς** provides the basis for the action of the Divine **πνεῦμα** . So in Romans he speaks of the renewing of the **νοῦς** and I Cor. 14.13 ff., he distinguishes between **τὸ πνεῦμα μου** and **ὁ νοῦς μου** , **πνεῦμα** denoting his inner life on the inspired side, while the **νοῦς** denotes cool judgment which regulates





spiritual experiences with a view to practical unity.

It must be noted that in Romans 11.34 and I Cor. 2.16,

Paul quotes the LXX of Isaiah, 40.13, retaining the ex-

pression *νοῦς Κυρίου, νοῦς* being the LXX trans-

lation of the Hebrew ruach, which is usually rendered *πνεῦμα*.



## Chapter VI

### ST. PAUL AND GNOSTICISM

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## Chapter VI

## SAINT PAUL AND GNOSTICISM

The similarity of language between Hermes and Paul is regarded as proving dependence of Paul upon him. The Hermetic mystery literature is a highly syncretistic blending of doctrine, and ritual. Reitzenstein believes that Hermetism, which is used as a label for doctrines of very different origin, was influenced by the universal spirit of devotion, and was not its creator. It was the result of a long-continued effort to reconcile the Egyptian traditions, first, with the Chaldean astrology, then with the Greek philosophy, and became transformed simultaneously with the philosophy.(1)

In Hermes, the  $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$  is regarded as the garment of the  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ . This doctrine is the exact reverse of Pauline teaching, since it makes the soul appear higher than the spirit whereas in Paul the spirit, in the believer, is exalted far above the soul. In Hermes the spirit appears as a material sub-stratum of the soul; in Paul the spirit represents the Divine Power. There could be no sharper contradiction.

Now, Reitzenstein says that the Hermetic doctrine is nothing but the necessary philosophic reversal of a gnostic doctrine that the soul is the garment of the spirit. It is certainly very hazardous to use Gnosticism, a post-Pauline phenomena, as an element in the religion of Paul. In reconstructing the origin of Paulinism, it is precarious

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(1) Troupe, p. 41



to employ the testimony of those who lived after Paul and actually quoted Paul.

In the mystical religion of Paul's day, Reitzenstein says, gnosis ( *γνῶσις* ) did not mean knowledge acquired by processes of investigation or reason, but the knowledge that came by immediate revelation from a God. Such immediate revelation was given in the Mystery Cults, by the mystic vision which formed a part of the experience of initiation; in the philosophising derivatives of the Mystery Cults, the revelation could be divorced from any external acts and connected with the mere reading of a book.

This conception of gnosis, some critics hold, is the conception which is found in the Pauline epistles; gnosis according to Paul was a gift of god, an experience produced by the divine spirit. Paul certainly regarded *γνῶσις*

as a gift of grace. Thus in I Cor. 13.2: "if I have prophecy and know all *μυστήρια* and all *γνῶσις* "

In I Cor. 12.8 we find it associated with *ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων προφητεία* and other gifts. We may agree with

Reitzenstein that for Paul *γνῶσις* never means merely rational knowledge. But in some passages Paul subordinates knowledge to love. In I Cor. 8.1-3, e.g., where he

addresses the stronger Christians at Corinth who think they all have knowledge, he says: *Ἡ γνῶσις φυσιοῦ, ἡ δὲ ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ. εἰ δὲ τις δοκεῖ εἰδέναι τι, οὐδέπω οὐδὲν ἔγνωκε καθὼς δεῖ γνῶναι. εἰ δὲ τις ἀγαπᾷ τὸν Θεόν, οὗτος ἔγνωσται ὑπ' αὐτοῦ.* <sup>(1)</sup>

(1) "Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth. If any man think-  
(See next p.)





A still more striking passage is that of Philipians

3.8-10: "ἀλλὰ μενοῦν γε καὶ ἡγοῦμαι πάντα  
ζημίαν εἶναι διὰ τὸ ὑπερέχον τῆς γνώσεως  
Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ Κυρίου μου, δι' ὃν τὰ  
πάντα ἐζημιώθην· καὶ ἡγοῦμαι σκύβαλα  
εἶναι, ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω, καὶ εὕρεθῶ  
ἐν αὐτῷ, μὴ ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν  
ἐκ νόμου ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ,  
τὴν ἐκ Θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει. (1)

Compare this with such a passage as the following  
from The Corpus Hermeticum which is composed of a number  
of rather incongruous strata, embodying gnostic notions all  
of which, Kenneay says, reflect the syncretistic mystery  
cults of the three centuries before and after the Christian

era. "διότι ὁ Θεὸς οὐκ ἀγνοεῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπον  
ἀλλὰ παντελῶς γινώσκει αὐτὸν καὶ ἐπιθυμεῖ  
γινώσκεσθαι ὑπ' αὐτοῦ. Τοῦτο γὰρ ἐστὶν  
σωτηρία ἀνθρώπου, ἡ γνῶσις Θεοῦ."

"Corp. Hermet. 10.15(2)

(cont'd. from p. 40) eth that he knoweth anything, he knoweth  
not yet as he ought to know; but if any man loveth God,  
the same is known by him."

(1) "Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the ex-  
cellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I  
suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse,  
that I may gain Christ. and be found in him, not having a right-  
eousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that  
which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is  
from God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his  
resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming  
conformed unto his death."

(2) "For God does not ignore man, but thoroughly knows and  
desires to be known by him. For this alone is salvation of God





In this connection we must take also into consideration the religious revival coupled with Stoicism. As we noticed in previous sections the Graeco-Roman world was falling apart. Stoicism gained ground because it satisfied more or less the vague desires of the populace for monotheistic deity. Through the influence of Oriental doctrines this religious revival put on a mystic color. According to Stoicism, the soul is a fragment of the Cosmic fires, because, as Posidonius held, everything was in harmony with the Cosmos in God, from whom, and through whom, all has its being. Troupe says, in this connection, that "it is not improbable that Paul is employing the same type of speech in such a passage as I Cor. 8.6: 'One God the Father, from whom (  $\epsilon\acute{\xi}$   $\omicron\upsilon$  ) are all things and we unto Him, and our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and we through Him;' also Colossians 1.16 f.: 'For in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him, and unto him; and he is before all things, and in him all things consist.'"(1)

In Hellenistic thought as represented by the mystical Hermetic Writings, the scheme of things includes a prominent figure, a  $\sigma\omega\tau\eta\rho$  : there is not only a way of redemption; there is a Redeemer. Now, insofar as this Redeemer

(1) St. Paul and the Mystery Religions, p. 43



is identified with the Man who taught by the lake of Galilee, there is no question whether we have a Christian or pagan doctrine; but the question may be raised whether primitive Christianity and Gnosticism fitted to Jesus of Nazareth the conception of a Redeemer older than Christianity, a conception which originally existed apart from Him, or whether it was the Christian belief in Jesus which induced the Gnostics to introduce the figure of a Redeemer into a scheme which had originally been framed without one.

It is important to notice that the idea of Jesus Christ does not stop simply with the separation of the Jesus from the *Χριστός*. There seems to have been a desire to find in him a bringing together of all the elements of the Universe, as it were the Pauline idea, *ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν Χριστῷ*, turned inside out. But the distinctive Christ-Mysticism of Paul, his "in Christ," "in the Lord", is something which offers a sharply marked contrast to the ideal of deification prevalent in Hellenistic piety, even if it shows an affinity with it on certain sides. The way in which Paul feels Christ as the over-arching and encompassing element of his higher spiritual self and at the same time as the power which determines and sustains the life of the Christian community--this is something for which any parallel in the religions of the surrounding world can be hardly found, even if the spiritualizing mysticism of the





Hermetic Writings, for instance, shows some faint analogies to it. (1)

As a matter of fact Hellenistic philosophy had much closer affinities with Apocalyptic hopes than might at first appear. In both we find the same deep-rooted pessimism with respect to the existing order, and the same belief in the malignant and all-pervading activity of evil spirits. Common to both was the belief in redemption, and the idea that redemption, in one aspect of it at least, consisted in deliverance from the tyranny which the evil spirits exercised. And as we can see from the Fourth Eclogue of Virgil, there was current in certain pagan circles something analogous to the Messianic hope. Indeed, it is by no means easy to decide how much of Paul's demonology is derived from Jewish, and how much from pagan sources. When he speaks of the heathen as being in bondage to the στοιχεῖα or astral spirits, and represents Christ as triumphing over principalities and powers on the Cross, it is in all probability the latter rather than the former that supply the background of his thought. (Gal. 4, 3, 9; and Col. 2.15)

The attempt has been made to show that in making redemption turn on Christ's death and resurrection, Paul was dominated by the redemption theology of the Hellenistic Cults. One and all these Cults attached themselves to the myth of a Savior-God (Θεός σωτήρ), subordinate to the Supreme God and often his son, who descended

(1) Bousset, W., Kyrios Christos, p. 172-3.



to earth, died, and rose again, opening to men by His death and resurrection the way to immortal and divine life. Such a Savior God was the Greek Dionysos, the Phrygian Attis, the Egyptian Serapis and the Persian Mithra. While the myth varies, the underlying ideas are everywhere the same, the one story may be taken as typical of all. Attis, who was miraculously born of a virgin, appears as a young and beautiful hunter, the husband of Cybele, the great mother of the Gods. Two different accounts are given of his death. According to the Lydian form of the myth, he was slain by a wild boar; according to the Phrygian, he mutilated himself in a fit of madness with which Cybele in a moment of jealousy had struck him, and expired under a pine tree. With passionate outcries Cybele lamented her dead lover. But after three days the God returned to life and Cybele's mourning was changed into joy. So runs the myth; and its original significance is clear. It carries us back to the days of nature worship. Like the Savior-Gods, Attis was originally an Astral or vegetation divinity, his death representing the decay that falls upon nature at the touch of winter, and his resurrection, the revival of spring. But in the Hellenistic times this primitive meaning of the myth had fallen into the background. It was no longer nature, but human destiny that was the center of interest. What the worshipper found in the story of Attis and similar stories was a type of the fall of the human soul from the ideal world and its





entanglement in the lower world of sense, a type also of its deliverance and reascent. (1)

That there is a certain resemblance between the part played by these pagan divinities and that which Christ plays in the theology of Paul cannot be denied. In both cases there is a death and resurrection to which saving significance is ascribed. But here the resemblance ends. The pagan divinities do not really accomplish anything for man's redemption, unless it be to establish the sacraments through which it is effected. They are not historical actors, but at best typical figures. Far other is the Christ of Paul. He enters into history in a decisive way and changes its course. The workings attributed to Him are real and historical. The liberation of the human spirit from an outworn religion, the introduction of the reign of grace, a shattering blow dealt at the power of sin, a new impulse towards goodness and God. That in constraining Christ's redemptive work the Apostle should have been in any way influenced by the crude and in part repulsive myths of a dying and rising Savior-God is unthinkable.

From another side, however, it is not so easy to deny Hellenistic influence. As we have just seen, the Apostle's construction of Christ's work in redeeming from the power of sin seated in the flesh is moulded on his conception of Christian piety as a dying and rising with Christ. And this conception is in its origin Hellenistic, however much

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(1) Bousset, Kyrios Christos, p. 165 ff.





Paul may have purified and elevated it. Here, then, at one point we can adduce an influence that does something to explain the exclusive significance attached to Christ's death and resurrection. That this influence was also active in the Apostle's construction of the redemption from the Law it would be hazardous to assert for in that case we would have to reckon with a starting-point in the primitive tradition.



## Chapter VII

### PAULINE AND PAGAN DOCTRINES OF THE SACRAMENTS

#### References:

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## Chapter VII

PAULINE AND PAGAN DOCTRINES  
OF THE SACRAMENTS

The presence of sacraments in the religion of Paul has given rise to various theories with regard to their supposed origin. The parallel between them and those of the Mystery Religions cannot be denied. The Mysteries usually connected with them ablutions of one kind or another and some sort of partaking of sacred food. Indeed rites of purification existed in all ancient religions. In the Eleusinian Mysteries, the Bath of Cleansing in the sea ( ἁλαδε μύσται ) played a prominent part. A similar rite was observed by the Orphic Cult. Part of the ceremonies connected with Isis consisted in sprinkling the neophyte. But an examination of the Mystery literature which has come down to us adduces no evidence whatsoever of Baptism into the name of any mystery deity. Nor has it been proved that in the mysteries baptism was connected closely with the new birth. There does indeed appear a passage in <sup>a</sup>papyrus letter written in the second century B.C.:

“ὅτι ψεύδῃ πάντα, καὶ οἱ παρὰ σε θεοὶ ὁμοίως, ὅτι ἐνβέβηκαν ὑμᾶς εἰς ὕλην μεγάλην, καὶ οὐ δύναμεθα ἀποθανεῖν. ἢ ἂν ἴδῃς ὅτι μέλλομεν σωθῆναι, τότε βαπτίζώμεθα”.

(Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la bibliothèque impériale, XVIII, 1865, p. 315) (1) But in view of

(1) see p. 49 for note.



its extreme obscurity it should not be made the basis of far-reaching conclusions, though it was possible to understand the death which would be attained in the mysteries, and to connect the baptism with that death and with the consequent salvation.

However, we must notice that Baptism here is considered as functioning ex opere operato. To Paul it does not signify that. According to him, salvation is attained as the consequence of a right relation to God through faith in Christ, crucified and risen again as a demonstration of the marvelous love of God manifested towards men. In Romans 5.1 there is a statement which throws a flood of light on <sup>the</sup> Pauline idea of salvation: "therefore God having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also, we have obtained access into the grace in which we stand." It is God that saves; baptism does not inevitably lead to spiritual regeneration. The external rite of baptism unaccompanied by an internal transformation is of no avail. "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him," (Romans 8.9.) While in the mystery doctrines there is no hint whatsoever that the divine *πνεῦμα* is ever connected with the ritual lustration.

Note 1 for page 48: For you are untruthful about all things and the Gods who are with you likewise, because they have cast you into great matter and we are not able to die, and if you see that we are going to be saved, then let us be baptized.





With regard to the partaking of sacred food, the evidence is in some respects more abundant. Even<sup>in</sup> the Mysteries of Eleusis, a special significance seems to have been attached to the drinking of the *κννεών* ; and the initiates into the Phrygian Mysteries are reported by Clement of Alexandria to have used a formulae including the words, "I ate from the drum, I drank from the cymbal." This fragment and other Clementine formulae seem to indicate that these actions were symbolical of new life, but there is no explicit evidence that they were ever intended to be sacramental. According to Reitzenstein (Hellenic Mystery Religions, p. 51) , Paul got his idea of the Lord's Supper from a magical text in which the blood of Osiris is represented as a loving potion, which produces a spell upon those who drink it. In I Cor. 11.23 we have Paul's own account: "For I received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, in the night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks he brake it and said, 'This is my body which is for you; this do in remembrance of me.' In like manner also the cup after supper, saying, 'This is the new covenant in my blood; this do as often as ye drink it in remembrance of me.' For as often as ye eat this bread and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death until he come."

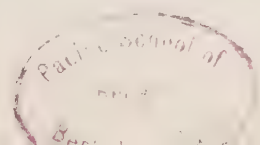
Professor Percy Gardner of Oxford holds that the words, "I received of the Lord also that which I delivered





unto you" refer to a vision which Paul had received. Most exegetes, however, reject this view. There can be no doubt that Paul means that he is practicing a custom which has been instituted by the Lord Jesus himself. For Paul, the Lord's Supper was a sacrament thoroughly ethical, grounded in genuine religious faith. It commemorated Christ's death and announced his death to the world. It was the setting forth of his death in symbolic form as expiatory, in which believers participated in the benefits of his expiatory death, and in which believers held living fellowship with him by the power of his Spirit, through faith, and in which believers also looked forward to meet Christ in heaven.

In I Corinthians we find three passages which throw light on Paul's idea of the Lord's Supper. I Cor. 10.1-5; 10.14-22; 11.17-34. In the first passage, the Apostle merely reminds them that the chosen people have enjoyed marvelous privileges, but notwithstanding, they fell into idolatry and impurity, for which reason God cast them off. So Christians are also capable of being seduced into heathen practices, consequently let them beware. The Lord's Supper and baptism are typical of God's favor under the new covenant, but they do not insure acceptance with God. "Our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual food and did





all drink the same spiritual drink, for they drank of a spiritual rock that followed them and the rock was Christ." The Apostle here merely means that the Divine provision for food was no safeguard against idolatry. In other words, the sacrament does not work ex opere operato, as seems to be implied in the pagan idea of "eating the god."

In I Cor. 10.14-21 we read: "Wherefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. The cup of blessing which <sup>we</sup> bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not communion of the body of Christ? Seeing that we, who are many, are one bread, one body; for we all partake of the one bread. Behold Israel after the flesh: Have not they that eat the sacrifices communion with the altar? What say I then? that a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? But I say, the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God: and I would not that ye should have communion with demons. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons: ye cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons." Here the Apostle openly charges with idolatry those Christians who have participated in the sacrificial meals of the pagans. To share in the table of the Lord, according to Paul, means to partake of the bread and wine, and this is described as communion with the body and blood of Jesus. But not the body and blood of Jesus





as such, is partaken of by the believers, not his human person as crucified on the cross. We never find Paul speaking of "eating the body" and "drinking the blood" of Christ. This idea is wholly lacking in Hebrew thought. Moreover, the phrases, "drinking the cup of demons" and "partaking of the table of demons", appear to indicate that Paul regarded the pagan Gods as being hosts at the sacrificial meals. This harmonizes with a passage in the Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions (2.71) quoted by Kennedy, p. 273. Every one who worships "those whom the pagans call Gods, or tastes meat sacrificed to them" is a "guest of demons", and has "fellowship with that demon whose aspect he has fashioned in his mind, whether from fear or love." There is no clear evidence, then, that Paul has borrowed from the pagan idea of the sacrament. The third passage, I Cor. 11.23 ff., has already been considered. It proves conclusively that Paul derives his authority to administer the Lord's Supper from the words and actions of Jesus himself.

The whole question hinges upon the problem whether the Pauline Sacraments conveyed their blessing ex opere operantis or ex opere operato. The error comes in confusing supernaturalism with sacramentalism. The very essence of Pauline teaching is supernaturalism. Salvation, according to Paul, is based upon a supernatural act of God--the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And equally supernatural is the application of salvation to the individual. Paulinism



is redemptive religion in the most thoroughgoing sense of the word; it finds salvation, not in a decision of the human will, but in an act of God. Paul's conception of salvation is supernatural, but it is not external. The beginning of a man's Christian life, according to Paul, is just as little a product of his own moral forces, just as little a product of any moral influence brought to bear upon him, as it would be if it were produced by the water into which he was dipped or the bread and wine of which he partakes. It is quite conceivable that God might utilize such adventitious aids. That is what Paul taught. And that is far, very far, from contemporary religious and philosophic doctrines in the Graeco-Roman world.



## Chapter VIII

### CONCLUSIONS

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## Chapter VIII

## CONCLUSIONS

This little essay is by no means an exhaustive treatise. What is attempted in this chapter is a fragmentary exposition which lays no claims whatsoever to scholarly achievement. The air resounds with the clash of arguments, particularly in this field of scholarship, between the modernist and the fundamentalist camps. It is unfortunate that problems such as this have to be considered, weighed, accepted or rejected purely on the basis of mere reason. Historical research, however infallible, finds itself up against religious sentiment. To the writer it seems that whatever the conclusions our study might lead to, it is of no great importance to the essentially religious man of faith. Modern Christianity, it is true, is very largely dependent on the expositions of Paul. Man is certainly conditioned by his environment. The fact that Paul lived in a very religious world is ample proof of this statement. But Paul's religion was essentially personal. It its make-up the existing conditions of religious and philosophic speculations that were rife in the Hellenistic world of his day would naturally have had their actions and reactions on the Apostle.

Ample evidence has been adduced to show the relation of the mystery religion to Paul's environment. Paul's converts were brought up in an atmosphere of the pagan mysteries. It is quite conceivable that Paul, being a



missionary statesman of no mean order was fully conversant with the mystery doctrines of his day, as well as the philosophic and eclectic tendencies prevalent in his age, with the express purpose of meeting their intellectual and religious doubts and difficulties. Whenever he came upon such terms as

etc., that could be utilized in the propagation of Christian Truth, he recognized their real worth to convey the rich spiritual content of Christian doctrines and to create at the same time important points of contact. Not only was this true of separate terms, but also occasionally true of certain groups of ideas. For instance, the mystery idea of transformation by the knowledge of God seems to find a close parallel in Phil. 3.10, where the Apostle says: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death."

However, it is hazardous to stretch this fact of the influence of Mystery terminology on Paul to needless length. For it is true at the same time that although Paul uses similar terms as employed in the Mystery Religions, the religious conceptions which dominated and found expressions in his writings were not at all the same in their essential religious significance in both the religion of Paul and that of contemporary paganism. There is no parallel in the mysteries to the Cross of Christ, as it figures in the Pauline sense. There is also no parallel in Paul's doctrine, to the idea of union with deity as it figures in





the Pauline sense. There is also no parallel in Paul's doctrine to the idea of union with deity as it figures in the mysteries. The two-fold element of faith, which looms up so large in Paul's doctrine, first, faith on the part of the individual to receive the promises of an Almighty and an all-loving God, and second, faith on the part of the surrendered soul to appeal to God for the fulfillment of his promises, is lacking in the mysteries.

All this is conspicuously absent in the thought-life as well as in the religious practice of contemporary paganism in general and in the Mystery Religions in particular. The crux of the whole matter is this: after his conversion experience there is wrought in the very being of the Apostle a transformation inadequate for mere words to describe, an ever-growing, intimate, real contact with God springing out of a consciousness of a fellowship with Christ. Transcending all temporal and spatial bounds such a marvelous experience, bringing him into an ideal relationship with the Eternal, Risen Christ, bears him up above into the realm of Eternal Reality, and, producing such a life--enhancing uplift in his whole outlook, imparts to his teaching a unique inspiration, and a vigorous ethical quality.

The key to the Apostle's conception of relationship to God is summed up in such passages as these: "I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I that live but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. 2.20). In Romans 8.15-16, he says, "You did not receive the spirit of



of bondage again, resulting in fear: but you received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." The Apostle's idea of union with Christ may be said to be a willing identification with the death of Christ, responsive to the love of the Cross, accompanied by cessations from sin. Paul is always careful to recognize the indubitable fact in the world of religious values of the essential independence of the human personality. In the Mystery Religions, for instance, the notion of identification with the deity invariably involved the idea more or less of an absorption, which obviously implies the eventual extinction of the independent human personality as a result of its merging into and losing itself in the greater and more complete entity of the deity. Not so with Paul. The fellowship of which he speaks, the fellowship with Christ is the result of the exercise of human will, and the identification with Christ is the primary step in our adoption, and our cognisance of the fact of our being the children of God. We are the children of God. This implies intimate, personal, conscious, free relationship; in a word, it is an idealistic in contrast to a pantheistic relationship with God.

Again, as we noticed with regard to the sacraments of the baptism and the Lord's Supper, although we do find a parallel in the Mystery rites of the day by no reasoning





whatsoever can we come to the conclusion that was anything like a parallel. The latter possessed no magical significance. They worked automatically, ex opere operato.

Schweitzer, in his book, Paul and His Interpreters, uses all the weight of his scholarship, and his critical acumen, to prove the fact that what distinguishes Paul and his religion above all is his characteristic scheme of eschatology. Paul's conception of union with the risen Christ is a vivid contrast with the popular conception of the Mystery idea, namely, that the divine essence passes into the soul of the living man, by means of gnosis and the vision of God. He proceeds to discuss, as only he is capable of discussing, Paul's conception in the light of a theory that he propounds--the theory of Consistent Eschatology. What interests us, in this connection, is the fact that he proves beyond the shadow of doubt that Paul's eschatology is not due to contemporary religious doctrines, either as depicted in the practice of mystery religious rites or as crystalized in the philosophic speculation of Gnosticism and Stoicism.

Paul always bears in mind the glorious consummation of the future, but it is equally certain that he presents no fixed program of events for that future. That, for him, was a passing from the present life into the presence of the living Lord. Life in Christ meant for him continued personal existence beyond the confines of time and space in conformity with the life of the glorified Lord. "For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his





death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection." (Romans 6.5)

The really distinctive achievement of Paul consists, however, not merely in the geographical sphere, the mere geographical extension of the frontiers of the church; it lies in a totally different sphere--in the hidden realm of thought. The theology of Paul--his interpretation of the death and resurrection of Jesus--cannot therefore be separated from his religion; on the contrary, it is his connection with it that is the fountain head wherefrom his deep religious fervor flows full and free.

Paul was a genius, and it is of the nature of genius to be creative. Therefore, what Paul says about Jesus and the origin of Christianity is no mere reflection of the facts, but the creation of his own mind which depends not so much upon details as upon the total facts of his religious life as a whole. Whatever the details may point to, what is really essential is abundantly plain, and may be put in a single word--The religion of Paul was a religion of redemption, rooted altogether in the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. Not upon right ideas about God and his relations to the world, but upon one thing that God had done; not upon an eternal truth of the Fatherhood of God, but upon the fact that God had chosen to become the Father of those who should accept the redemption offered by Christ/Jesus, for Paul. was primarily not a revealer, but a savior. And whatever Hellenistic element there be that can be traced in Paul's religion as<sup>a</sup> result of his close and intimate



contact with contemporary religious thought is absolutely subsidiary. As a missionary, with the wise sagacity and natural leadership of a statesman, he utilizes, whenever he can, mystery religions' terminology, gnostic and stoic philosophic concepts, not only as a vehicle to convey adequately the rich spiritual content of his religious teachings so as to make them easily grasped and understood by the Gentiles of his day, but also to make clear the fact of the essential difference as clear cut as the seeming resemblance. Therein lay the greatness of Paul's creative genius. And that is how he laid the foundations of Christianity as a Universal Religion with a universal appeal.





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